

Targeted Learning Sessions to enhance the assessment performance of first-year Māori and Pasifika students

This paper outlines a practical teaching support initiative, Targeted Learning Sessions (TLS), which melds pastoral and academic support together to provide a non-threatening pathway for all students to seek discipline-specific assessment advice. The design and application of TLS and the strategies developed to engage Māori and Pacific first-year learners in this system of academic support is the central focus of this publication. Section 1 provides details on the underlying pedagogy and first-year context that inform the TLS system. Section 2 details the structure and delivery of the TLS. Section 3 provides strategies for engaging Māori and Pacific students within this teaching support initiative and ideas for adapting the initiative into other tertiary contexts.

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*He waka eke noa
We are all in this together*



Figure 1: Targeted Learning session 2013

Section 1: Introduction

While students can with difficulty escape from the effects of poor teaching, they cannot (by definition if they want to graduate) escape the effects of poor assessment...If, as teachers and educational developers, we want to exert maximum leverage over change in higher education, we must confront the ways in which assessment tends to undermine learning (Boud, 1995, p. 35).

Boud's sobering observation nearly two decades ago still carries considerable resonance. It remains true that many tertiary educators come to teaching with little formal knowledge of effective teaching and assessment practice. As a result assignments are not always well written, have a clear link with stated learning outcomes or are constructed with an understanding of how to scaffold resources around the assessment task. Less academically confident students are more vulnerable to poor assessment practice. They are more likely to find it hard to get started, are less likely to ask for help and are reluctant to query an assessment task for fear of being labelled incompetent. Students coming from a cultural background that discourages questioning authority figures are also likely to be hesitant to ask for clarification and are reluctant to be seen to seek assistance.

Building on international studies on first-year retention and teaching students from diverse backgrounds, the body of research into creating successful strategies for Māori and Pasifika students to succeed in their first year of study is growing (for example, Arini *et al.*, 2010; Bennett, 2002; Benseman *et al.*, 2006; Curtis *et al.*, 2012; Ferguson *et al.*, 2008; Greenwood & Te Aika, 2008; Johnston, 2008; Madjar, McKinley, Deynzer, van der Merwe, 2010; Matheson, 2012; Sapoaga & Van Der Meer, 2011; Tahau-Hodges, 2010; Zepke & Leach, 2007). The findings and practical strategies outlined in these publications add to the weight of statistical evidence produced by New Zealand government agencies: the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and government reports such as Earle (2008) and Scott (2006) provide vital snapshots of Māori and Pasifika achievement in the tertiary sector, which should challenge and inform current teaching practice.

Arini *et al.*'s (2010) focus on improving Māori and Pasifika learner success in tertiary education calls for the need to "rethink and reaffirm definitions of 'student support'" (2010, p. 37). They recommend that the distinctions between academic and pastoral support be eliminated to encourage a higher level of academic performance, retention and completion for Māori and Pasifika students. A student perspective indicates the efficacy of non-lecture teaching and the need for educators to assist their students to achieve "clarity about assignments" (2010, p.12).

The impetus to address issues of assessment practices and to promote help-seeking behaviour as a norm for first-year students prompted the creation of the Targeted Learning Sessions in the Faculty of Arts. Although designed to appeal to all students, particular emphasis was placed on adapting this initiative to appeal to Māori and Pacific learners. Teaching experience backed by the literature tells us that the impact of poor assessment practice results in disengagement from learning, engenders a sense of personal inadequacy, and contributes to lower retention rates (Boud, 2012). It is particularly likely to have a higher impact on English Additional Language (EAL) and equity¹ students (Macleod & Wilson, 2012; Henley, 2009).

Content

This paper outlines a practical teaching support initiative, Targeted Learning Sessions (TLS), which melds pastoral and academic support together to provide a non-threatening pathway for all students to seek discipline-specific assessment advice. The design and application of TLS and the strategies developed to engage Māori and Pacific first-year learners in this system of academic support is the central focus of this publication. Section 1 provides details on the underlying pedagogy and first-year context that inform the TLS system. Section 2 details the structure and delivery of the TLS. Section 3 provides strategies for engaging Māori and Pacific students within this teaching support initiative and ideas for adapting the initiative into other tertiary contexts.

How to navigate this paper

The written text aims to provide a detailed overview of the TLS scheme informed by the context within which it operates in our Faculty. Accompanying the text is a selection of video sound bites from TLS participants, ranging across academic teaching staff, librarians, Student Learning tutors, mentors through to the students who use the service. Their perspectives flesh out the bare bones of the practical details contained in the text and, more importantly, put faces to this very people-centred collaborative teaching and learning initiative. You do not need to watch the video material to understand the programme or access the interviews in the order presented in the article. You can chart your own course through the material depending on your teaching focus.

Background

In 2010 the Faculty of Arts at The University of Auckland introduced the first phase of a First-Year Experience (FYE) mentor-based programme adapted from the model developed at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The aim was to develop a student-orientated support programme to assist first-year students in the faculty to make a successful transition into tertiary study. By 2011, the majority of first-year courses in the faculty were included in the programme, which now links approximately 1,800 new students each year into

¹ Equity in an Australian context (in this article) relates to indigenous peoples and those of low socio economic status. In Henley (2009) equity refers to Māori and Pacific and students with disabilities.

FYE support. These students are automatically gathered into a database and allocated a trained student mentor who offers weekly contact and pastoral support. To help increase academic performance and improve student retention at year one, data is gathered of tutorial attendance and assignment submission. This triggers early warning intervention strategies to assist all students to meet their academic goals.



Figure 2: First-Year Experience mentors 2013

Targeting Learning Sessions (TLS)

Phase two of the FYE programme was to create a closer working relationship between professional and academic staff to streamline the delivery of discipline specific assessment support for first-year students. This did not require the development of a new set of student-orientated services but a rethink of how to combine the teaching and learning expertise already in existence. The outcome was the creation of TLS, drawing together the services of course convenors, academic tutors, librarians, writing tutors, FYE and Māori and Pacific Tuākana² mentors. Also known colloquially as ‘Assignment Help Flybys’, these sessions offered a ‘one stop assignment-busting shop’ conducted in an open-plan space in the main library. The strength of the scheme was that it solved key pedagogical and economic issues in the delivery of academic support (Cameron, George & Henley, 2012). It also demonstrated to staff and students in a public forum the practical application of George Kuh’s (2007) oft-quoted maxim that providing academic support is “everyone’s business”.

² Tuākana Arts supports a network of senior students (Tuākana) who provide workshops and pastoral and academic support aimed at raising the retention rate and grade average of first-year Māori and Pacific students.



Figure 3: Target Learning Sessions – “everyone’s business”

Relevance to Māori and Pacific first-year learners

The findings of Scott (2008), as endorsed by Earle (2008), identify Māori and Pasifika students as “less likely to pass all their first-year degree courses than non-Māori, or non-Pasifika students respectively”. Scott’s 2008 Ministry of Education survey also found Māori students more likely to drop out of degree study after their first year. A Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs report (2009 draft) identified a range of personal and institutional barriers that impact on the retention rate of Pacific Island students. The recommendation to address this dropout rate was to improve the quality of teaching and build a supportive learning environment that included student support services... The creation of our FYE and TLS programmes were cognisant of these findings.

At a practical level the most common cause of student first-year dropout is the non-completion of assessment tasks, which often snowballs into an examination ‘Did Not Sit’ (DNS) grade. The key to directly addressing this ‘fail cycle’ is to devise an early intervention system to assist students complete their assessment tasks in a non-intrusive way that is more under their direct control. Māori and Pacific students have historically featured prominently in the DNS category, with Pacific students more at risk of DNS than any other ethnic group. Therefore, **phase three** was to further adapt the TLS to encourage more Māori and Pacific learners to make this their first port of call when preparing a major assessment task. The first strategy was to engage Māori and Pacific students who are the minority in first-year core courses, and second, to look at ways to integrate TLS into courses where Māori or Pacific students are the majority, such as in Pacific or Māori Studies departments. These strategies are addressed in the final section.

Problem-solving approach

Before designing the TLS we identified a range of teaching and learning issues we felt needed to be addressed with fresh ideas. The following issues are not unique to our institution and are frequently noted in a range of UK, USA and Australian first-year literature.

Teaching and learning issues for all first-year students:

- hesitance in routinely seeking academic support throughout their academic studies
- increasingly low use of tutor office hours when preparing for an assignment
- preference to use email and obtain a brief response in writing from tutor or lecturer to try and get the 'correct answer'
- tendency to start research and writing too close to assignment deadline (usually one to two days before due date)
- lack of familiarity with or reluctance to attend any academic support service that is not discipline specific such as subject librarian, student learning writing tutor, library workshops
- lack of awareness of the valuable academic support professional staff can offer students
- poor database research skills and discernment over quality of online resources
- poor referencing skills.

Teaching and learning issues for first-year Māori and Pacific students:

- routinely a minority in mainstream tutorials in large classes if dedicated Māori and Pacific tutorials not available
- reluctance of Māori and Pacific students to approach tutors and lecturers during office hours
- lack of familiarity with the library building, library and student support services.
- high sensitivity to being perceived as the group of students often in need of academic support
- reluctance to be associated with support that could be mistakenly labelled as 'remedial'
- disproportionately higher Did Not Complete (DNC) and DNS rate for Pacific students
- lower use of additional Tuākana workshops by Māori students in comparison to uptake by Pacific students.

The challenge was to design a scheme that would address many of the above issues in a highly visible way. We knew the first step was to get academic support out from behind the daunting office door and the limitations of the generic workshop. The secondary challenge was to create a service that would draw on currently allocated resources and staff time without incurring any additional expense.

It had to be an option that:

- students valued and quickly became a 'go-to' assessment preparation activity
- all students felt comfortable attending and being seen to be there
- accommodated the learning needs of Māori and Pacific students
- appealed to other minority groups within large classes
- provided a stimulating teaching and learning forum for all participants
- rapidly demonstrated proven academic outcomes
- encouraged close collaboration between academic and professional colleagues
- fitted within the work patterns and existing job descriptions of professional staff.

TLS rapidly became a highly visible assessment support programme that put into practice George Kuh's 2007 theory that providing academic support is "everyone's business"

Section 2: Anatomy of a Targeted Learning Session



Targeted Learning Sessions Introduction video on YouTube

The introductory video is a promotion and explanation of TLS, which is pitched to a class the week before a TLS session. It provides an overview of a typical targeted learning session and is also available on their course webpage. The aim is to familiarise the students with the format and get them used to including TLS in their assignment preparation.

TLS are offered to students in a block of three to four hours depending on the class size. Waiting for the students is a reception team of the FYE manager assisted by FYE mentors. The students are greeted warmly and asked to identify what stage they have reached in their assignment preparation. Students who have not even read the assignment sheet or chosen a topic are made to feel as welcome as those who come with a well-developed draft and just want some tips on further resources, structure, or reference style. The mentor then guides them to the most appropriate starting point, explaining how this will help them with their assessment task. The mentors act as 'sheepdogs' to ensure the students don't have to wait in line and are assisted to move between each of the help stations rather than just talk to one person and feel they have to leave. The aim is to normalise the sessions as something everyone does and help them to get the most out of the assistance on offer.

In the front of the space, five to six laptop workstations are set up and manned by library staff. The librarians work in hour-long shifts and actively search relevant databases with each student to locate, assess and select relevant online academic resources and help with referencing. The library workstations are clearly labelled so that students can see what type of help the librarians can offer. This aspect alone of TLS has

contributed to a marked improvement in essay content through a wider use of relevant online resources and improved referencing skills.



Figure 4: Database search and referencing workstations



Figure 5: Tips on database search and referencing



Sarah Etheridge
Subject Librarian

Librarian Voice video on YouTube

Behind the librarian's workstations, small group discussion pods are set up, where students can sit in a circle and discuss their ideas, ask questions, refer to drafts *etc.* with their tutor, lecturer or course convenor. This is often the first port of call for the students to help clarify the requirements of the question and focus on content.

In another corner the Student Learning writing tutor works with students who are unsure how to start writing or who have a draft for feedback. The most frequent requests are for help with writing thesis statements and introductions.



Dr Sean Sturm
Writing Tutor – Student Learning Services

Dr Sean Sturm - writing tutor video on YouTube

How to set up a Targeted Learning Session

Collaboration between the library and the TLS team is essential to ensure that the space and the professional staff support are able to be accessed. Academic tutors are contracted to transfer their office hours to TLS in the relevant week so there is no additional discretionary cost to the teaching unit. Likewise for library and professional support staff who are rostered into TLS sessions as they would be for generic workshops. There should be no or only minimal addition to the workload of professional or academic staff involved.

TLS can be adapted to work within staffing and location options in any institution. You do not need to have a FYE structure to include TLS as part of your student support programme but you do require personnel to plan and deliver the initiative. The collaboration between one academic staff member with knowledge of teaching and learning theory and practice and a professional staff member such as a librarian or FYE manager is strongly recommended.

In the week before a TLS:

- TLS manager and/or course convenor pitches the relevance and reward of attending the upcoming TLS and shows the video in class
- course convenor makes explicit to students the link between improved academic achievement and attending TLS
- attendance roster finalised for library and support staff
- attendance roster finalised for academic tutors
- mentor volunteer roster finalised to help library staff set up workstations on the day
- academic tutors encourage their students to start preparing for the TLS so they can get maximum assistance from the sessions
- FYE mentors (or similar) encourage their mentees via email to attend the TLS and make times to meet so small groups can go together
- Tuākana mentors encourage students in workshops to attend TLS and organise buddy groups to meet up and attend together
- Māori and Pasifika tutors and Tuākana mentor arrange meeting times for Māori and Pacific tutorial groups to attend TLS together.

Successful Elements check list:

- Promote the link between academic success and TLS to academic staff through faculty Teaching and Learning seminars.
- Work alongside course convenors to re-evaluate assessment structures and integrate TLS into a formative assessment scheme.
- Embed TLS into assessment framework across faculty.

- Brief all professional and academic staff in advance as to the structure and aims of the sessions.
- Provide advice to course convenors to tailor strategies that encourage and engage Māori and Pasifika students in TLS.
- Obtain a suitable location or transform a usually inflexible library space into a temporary drop-in learning centre.
- Timing is critical – exactly seven days before an assignment’s due date proved the ideal. Scheduling a session directly after a lecture always ensures maximum uptake.
- Participation of course convenor and teaching staff is crucial.
- Preparation by tutors one week prior to the TLS to assist students to gain the most value out of the service.
- Cancel tutor office hours in TLS week and roster tutors throughout sessions.
- Ensure that there are always academics from the course rostered on every hour.

Unexpected early outcomes

1) Attendance

The very first TLS attracted approximately 300 students from a class of 430 over a period of two three-hour blocks offered on two consecutive days. Previous attendance for all tutor office hours for this course during the week before an assignment totalled approximately 20 students. Student approval for the new way to attend ‘office hours’ was instant.

2) Dealing with large numbers of students

The concern that having so many students in the area at one time may inhibit individual student learning proved to be totally unfounded. The students clearly prefer the ‘buzz’ of the crowd and frequently commented on how helpful it was to listen to other students’ questions as they are waiting their turn in the discussion circle. This was an unexpected bonus and proved to be a vital element in our goal to promote and normalise help-seeking behaviour for all students.

3) Embedding TLS in assignment preparation

Once TLS was offered in the majority of first-year courses in the faculty, students rapidly began to accommodate them into their assignment preparation. The majority of the class started assignment preparation earlier than experienced pre-TLS, and some students made return visits later in the session after redrafting their introduction, for example. Where sessions are run on two consecutive days for some of the bigger courses students often returned the next day with an amended draft for consultation.

4) Staff satisfaction

Professional and academic staff were unanimous in their enjoyment and approval of the sessions. Many felt that it was the most productive teaching experience they had with students over the semester and were impressed with the evident level of approval and gratitude expressed by the students. Course convenors (many of whom only deliver lectures and do not teach tutorials) received a crash course from students on the clarity of their assignment writing ability. Tutors noted the range of students from the class who attended, including students who never attended tutorials. Library staff enjoyed sharing their database search and referencing skills. The writing tutors were in high demand and discovered that the students appreciated listening to the advice given to others while waiting their turn for consultation.

5) Impact on assessment practice

The high student buy-in was directly related to the assessment-driven focus of TLS. Academic staff appreciated the discussion on assessment planning, structure and resource support prior, which is part of the TLS pre-planning process. Confusingly worded or poorly pitched and resourced assessment tasks were reworked before being released to the students. Convenors were encouraged to include subject matter or question options that were more engaging and culturally relevant to Māori and Pacific students.

6) Location and use of shared library space

The University's main library was built in the 1970s based on a very different engagement with resources and learning than students prefer and expect now. However, it is still a place of quiet study and there was concern in some quarters that other students using the library would not like the level of disruption. In fact there was the opposite reaction and regularly students from other faculties asked about the sessions and want to know when they would be taking place in their faculty. Institutions with more modern library architecture can easily adapt informal learning spaces for TLS delivery.

7) Influence on projected use of library space

The successful adaption of library space and the additional breakout area used for Māori and Pacific students became an example of how to cost-effectively transform library space. A current proposal to introduce modular furniture and beanbags is a logical development for TLS and a welcome addition to the library for all students when TLS are not in operation.



Tanya Malan
Media, Film & Television tutor

Tanya Malan – Media, Film and television tutor video on YouTube

The sessions normalised asking help to understand the question, how to start researching, how to assess resource material and how to start writing. Consequently there was frequently a higher and more sustained commitment to the assessment task. Students felt more in control of the process rather than feeling disempowered and sometimes punished by the outcome.

Results

In the first year of our FYE programme and the introduction of TLS in the second year we charted a marked improvement in academic performance. It is not possible to gather data that specifically links academic improvement just to TLS as there are many contributing factors but an overall trend can be identified. In 2010 we were only able to track half the students in the faculty which conveniently gave us a control group for comparison. Our first goal was to reduce DNS rates and improve the Grade Point Average (GPA) of first year students. As can be seen in the graph below the group supported by FYE in 2010 did exactly that.

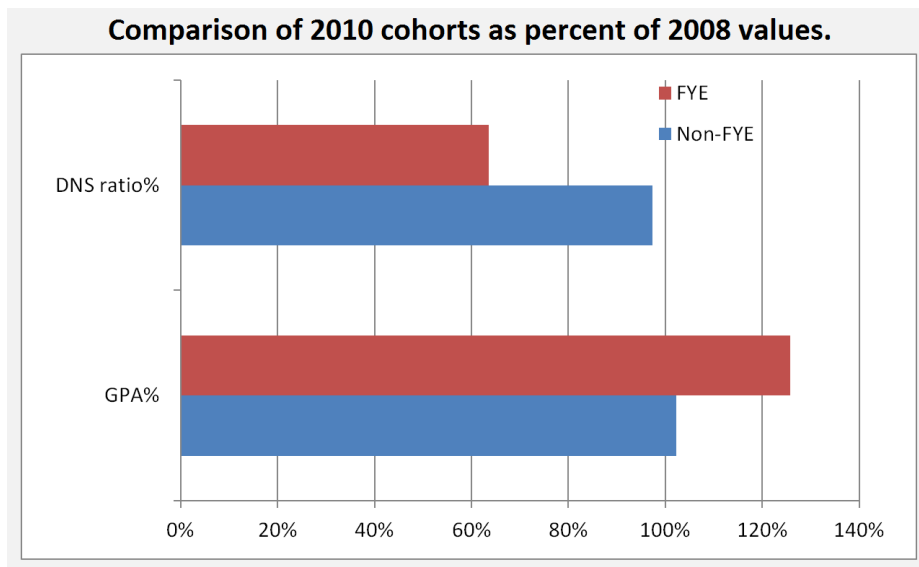


Figure 6: Comparison by ratio of DNS and GPA performance of FYE and non-FYE cohorts 2010

The addition of TLS in 2011 built on this positive trend. We were surprised that the reduction of DNS did not pull down the grade average slightly as more under-performing students completed their course work. In fact students at all grade levels improved their academic performance. Prior to FYE and the introduction of TLS the DNS rate for the faculty remained relatively stable representing students struggling to reach the required academic level, disengaged from their studies or rarely attending university. The following graph, also expressed as a ratio, indicates the continued reduction in DNS rates as the early intervention strategies of FYE and the repackaged way of offering academic support through TLS paid dividends. Note the comparison between 2008/9 and 2012 once FYE and TLS were well established.

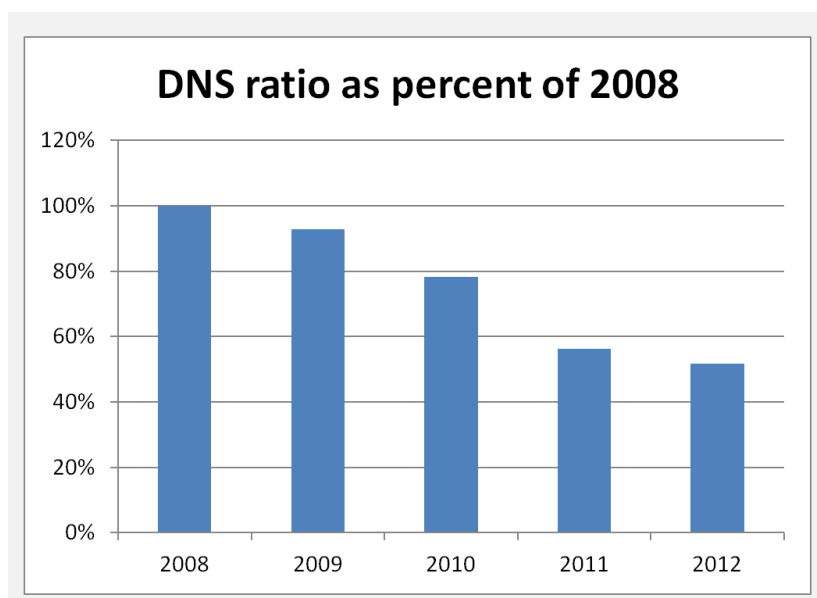


Figure 7: Year one DNS rates 2008 – 2012

As the DNS rate steadily fell the upward GPA trend continued to build incrementally each year. The trend in QUT, our benchmark FYE programme, indicated that such gains would level out after approximately three years. This has yet to happen in our faculty but we do expect the gain to slow over the next two years. The following graph indicates a significant improvement in 2011 and a smaller but still a positive gain in 2012. As with the DNS results the telling comparison is between 2008/9 and 2011 when the FYE and TLS programmes are well established and adapting to meet the learning needs of first year students in ARTS.

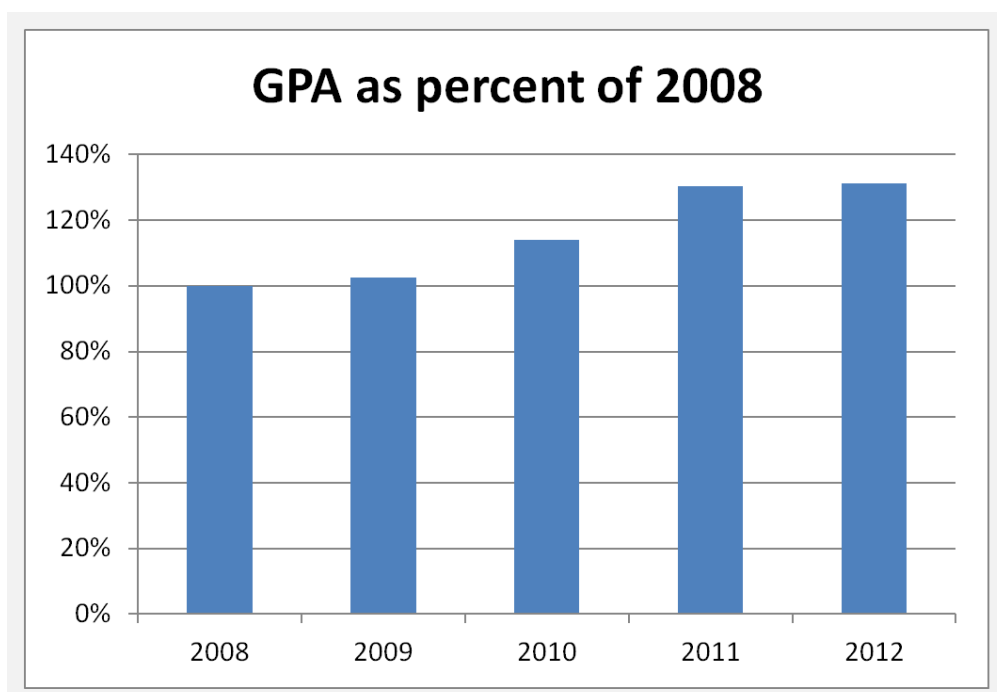


Figure 8: Increase in GPA of first year Faculty of Arts students 2008 to 2012

Section 3: Adapting TLS to Māori and Pacific Learners



Figure 9: Working with the Student Services Writing tutor

TLS can be embedded into any assessment programme. When these students are the minority (which is the case in most mainstream first-year courses), provision is made to create a culturally welcoming space within TLS and prepare these students to attend and feel confident within the throng of fellow class attendees. Where Māori and Pacific students are the majority, the TLS sessions are offered in the same way as for any first-year class but with a higher input from Māori and Pacific professional and academic staff where appropriate or available.

Many Māori and Pacific learners found it liberating to witness so many other students in their class asking the same questions they wanted answered and requesting the same level of academic assistance to get their assessment task under way or refined.

Māori and Pacific students in mainstream courses

The starting point is to consider the services that are already offered to support Māori and Pacific first-year learners at department, faculty and institutional level. It is then simply a matter of collaborating with these services and linking up with existing mentors or tutors to encourage the students to prepare for and participate in TLS. Initially this is time-consuming as you need to negotiate and then promote how this is to work in each course. Never underestimate the value of the careful promotion required to run each TLS successfully.

In courses where there is a dedicated Māori and Pacific tutorial offered within the mainstream tutorial mix the students already have a close relationship with their tutor and associated Tuākana mentor. This makes it relatively easy to link students into TLS support from this tutorial base and embed it within their assignment preparation.



Dr Suzanne Woodward
Media, Film & Television Māori and Pasifika tutor

Dr Suzanne Woodward, Māori and Pasifika Tutor video on YouTube

Where there is no separate Māori and Pacific tutorial option a mechanism needs to be devised to contact and encourage these students in the class to attend. In our faculty the obvious mechanism is through the Tuākana network but course tutors or a Māori or Pacific learning support tutor can also provide this function. Māori mentors in particular often have a strong rapport with their students, which is always a successful element in encouraging unconfident learners to engage with a new learning scheme. All the Māori and Pacific students in the class are contacted by email and encouraged to link up with the mentor and fellow students at an arranged meeting time and attend the TLS as a group. Key Māori and Pacific academic support staff are scheduled at these times to ensure the larger group is able to be accommodated.



Leilani Walker
Te Fale Pouāwhina Learning Advisor

Leilani Walker, Māori and Pasifika Learning Advisor video on YouTube



Figure 10: Linking the essay question to resources with the Pasifika Liaison Librarian

Once the use of the space for TLS was established and refined, it was relatively easy to add extra features to create a culturally welcoming environment for Māori and Pacific learners. A Māori and Pacific subject librarian was available at a library workstation, but in addition a separate space was created off the side of the main TLS area. This additional area grew almost organically as Tuākana mentors created their own space to gather their students. The students could sit informally on the floor with their mentor to settle in before being accompanied into the mainstream area to consult with the staff member best suited to address their questions. Sometimes these groups stayed on afterwards in the Māori and Pacific breakout area to share their insights from discussions with a subject librarian, a writing tutor or their course convenor (whom they would rarely approach in any other circumstance).



Chloe Manga, Tuākana Mentor video on YouTube



Figure 11: Tuākana Mentor welcoming a student to TLS before guiding her to the first workstation



Sereana Naepi, Undergraduate Coordinator Tuākana Programme

Why use the library for Māori and Pacific TLS?

Why not relocate the TLS from the library to an area where Māori and Pacific students feel more comfortable and are used to hanging out together? Annual FYE questionnaires indicated that many Māori and Pacific first-year students were reluctant to enter or use the library space. Many expressed their nervousness about the library environment, which they found intimidating. It was a space where they felt they were not welcome because they perceived that it was ‘owned’ by other groups of students. Many indicated that they would never attend the library on their own and did not want to be seen asking for help as to how to use the facility. This feedback informed our decision to locate TLS in the library to help demystify the space and broker positive interaction with learning support staff for the less confident students. A bonus is that the library is a relatively neutral space, away from departments, teaching rooms, lecture theatres and the more formal sites of instruction. The free-flow TLS environment meant students did not feel trapped or conspicuous and could slip in and out of session as they pleased.

Successful elements for engaging Māori and Pacific students:

- Provide students in advance with statistical evidence linking improvement of assignment grades with attendance at TLS.
- Show TLS promotional video in class so students know exactly what to expect and how to use the service.
- Dedicate tutorial preparation time to plan how students can make the most out of attending TLS to improve their assignment grade.

- Use tutorial time to help students write a schedule for their assignment research and writing time which includes TLS.
- Arrange a meeting time and place so students can go in buddy groups to TLS.
- Māori or Pacific Tuākana mentor should accompany students to TLS or become part of the student mentor welcome team.
- Tutor available to help navigate students through the workstations and share in discussion.
- Ensure that Māori or Pacific librarian is available when the groups of Māori and Pacific students are expected.



Figure 12: Working with the Student Services writing tutor

Later refinement of TLS which encouraged higher Māori and Pacific attendance:

- Increase the images of Māori and Pacific students in the TLS promotional video.
- Place the video on the course webpage.
- Inclusion of Māori and Pacific Learning Services Advisor to help with essay drafts and writing introductions and conclusions.
- Development of additional space, adjacent to main TLS area where students could sit informally on the floor with their Tuākana mentor, subject tutor and Learning Support tutor.
- Students who come early in a three-hour session encouraged to use a library workstation to refine their draft/introduction/thesis statement and come back again for further consultation. This was a very popular suggestion and enabled students to commence their writing confident that they had understood the question and had written a competent introductory paragraph.

Where Māori or Pacific students are the majority

In these courses no major changes are required to the way in which the librarians, writing support tutors etc. set up or deliver a TLS. The library space is still set up in the same way. Many of the students will have attended a TLS in another first-year course so they will be familiar with the layout and protocol. The only

difference was the increased presence of Māori and Pacific library and teaching and writing support staff and academic tutors.

The greatest effort needs to be in working alongside the course convenor and the tutorial team to integrate the TLS into the tutorial structure and the academic support offered in that discipline area. If a specialist Māori and/or Pacific subject librarian is available, they become an important member of the academic planning team to scaffold resources around the assessment task. This planning should be done as early as possible, and certainly within the first weeks of the semester at the latest, to ensure that the sessions are included in all the course information material and assignment sheets.



Figure 13: Discussing how to unpack an assignment question with the course tutor



Marina Alofagia McCartney
Pacific Studies tutor

Marina Alofagia McCartney, Pacific Studies Tutor video on YouTube

Trigger Assignments

The inclusion of a low-value trigger assignment to structure an assessment pathway into the major piece of work is a useful way of encouraging students to start preparation early for their assignment. This should be for credit (5-10%) and can be marked online (*e.g.* Turnitin Grade Mark) to ensure fast turnaround and timed approximated seven days before the TLS. A trigger assignment can be an essay plan and proposed bibliography; essay plan and sample introductory paragraph; thesis statement and essay plan or a sample paragraph. This provides the students with rapid, early feedback that can guide them into their next phase of research, drafting and writing. They can take their trigger assignment and feedback with them to the TLS to be used as a focus for their questions. The other benefit is that this low assessment weighted task can initiate early warning strategies should students fail to submit or present inadequate content. The late submission of the trigger assignment and support in TLS can often get a student back on the assessment ladder without serious mark penalties.

Summary of successful elements:

- Short trigger assignment seven days before TLS
- early academic intervention initiated by trigger assignment if appropriate
- TLS offered seven days before assessment deadline
- TLS offered directly after course lecture where possible
- students prepped in tutorials to attend TLS in tutorials two weeks in advance
- course convenor introduces FYE/Tuākana mentors in lecture room and all teaching staff and mentors walk with the students over to the library space, chatting about the TLS on the way
- Māori and/or Pacific librarians rostered into sessions.



Student Voice video on YouTube

Conclusion

'If you build it they will come'

The central premise in the 1989 film 'Field of Dreams' has become a popular cultural metaphor for the attainment of hitherto unfulfilled ambitions. The first Targeted Learning Session although built on sound teaching and learning pedagogy, was offered with no idea if it would appeal to more than a handful of students. It proved to be a service that appealed to the majority of students and was located in a space where they felt comfortable to learn and be seen to ask for academic assistance. We built it and they came!

Of equal importance was who came to these sessions. With a few adaptations Māori and Pasifika students increasingly became regular and committed attendees. As we refined the sessions and tailored them more to this group of learners we achieved better results. The collaborative approach became the catalyst for a more effective delivery of teaching and learning expertise. The pragmatic clincher is that the scheme does not rely on additional funding or appointing new staff roles – it is simply a redeployment of existing staff and services shaped by good teaching practice that appeals to the needs of contemporary learners.

Collaborate

Adapt

Rebrand

Build it and they will come!

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